

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6385
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 1486

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, UY
SUBJ: VISIT OF ICRC OFFICIALS TO URUGUAY

REF: GENEVA 4979

1. SUMMARY. INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC) DELEGATE GENERAL FOR LATIM AMERICA SERGE NESSI AND ALEXANDRE FABER ICRC DELEGATE RESIDENT IN BUENOS AIRES VISITED MONTEVIDEO APRIL 24-25 TO PURSUE ICRC INTEREST IN RESTORING RELATIONSHIP BROKEN OFF WITH GOU IN EARLY 1976. DELEGATES HAD CONSTRUCTIVE MEETINGS WITH FONMIN ROVIRA AND WITH CHIEF OF ARMED FORCES JOINT STAFF (ESMACO) GENERAL RAPELLA AS WELL AS WORKING SESSION WITH AMBASSADOR, DCM AND POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF. THE ALL IMPORTANT MILITARY ARE AT LAST CONSIDERING THE ICRC APPROACH AND WE ARE HOPEFUL FOR A SHIFT IN THE GOU POSITION. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING SEVERAL VISITS OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE ICRC DELEGATES HAVE GOTTEN NO FURTHER THAN POLITE RECEPTION FROM FOREIGN MINISTER ROVIRA WHO HAS PROMISED TO TAKE THEIR APPROACH UNDER CONSIDERATION AND INFORM THEM OF ANY DEVELOPMENTS. THEY NEVER WERE CONTACTED AS PROMISED. ACCORDING TO NESSI, THIS TIME ROVIRA ENGAGED IN MORE
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POSITIVE DIALOGUE WITH THEM, TOLD THEM THAT HE FAVORED A RESTORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP AND PROMISED TO PURSUE THE MATTER WITHIN THE GOU. EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, ROVIRA PROMPTLY ARRANGED AN APPOINTMENT FOR THE DELEGATES WITH NEWLY-APPOINTED ESMACI CHIEF GENERAL RAPELLA.

3. NESSI REPORTED THAT THE DISCUSSION WITH GENERAL

RAPELLA WAS A GREAT IMPROVEMENT OVER PAST DISCUSSIONS. RAPELLA LISTENED POLITELY AND RECEIVED FROM THEM A FORMAL REQUEST TO REINITIATE ICRC PRISON VISITS IN URUGUAY, WHICH SPELLED OUT THE ICRC'S VERY SPECIFIC CONDITIONS. RAPELLA, WHO APPEARED INTERESTED IN DOING SOMETHING TO IMPROVE THE GOU'S HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE, PROMISED TO PUT THE MATTER BEFORE THE ARMED FORCES CINCS. THE ICRC DELEGATES DEPARTED EXPECTING THAT THIS TIME SOME ANSWER WILL BE GIVEN TO THEM.

4. AT A WORKING SESSION WHICH WE HELD WITH FONMIN ROVIRA AND HIS SENIOR ADVISORS SEVERAL DAYS LATER, ROVIRA VOLUNTEERED THAT HE THOUGHT THE RUPTURE WITH THE ICRC, WITH WHICH HE HAD NOT BEEN ASSOCIATED, HAD BEEN A MISTAKE. HE SAID HE FAVORED RESTORING THE RELATIONSHIP AND WOULD PRESS FOR THIS POSITION WITH THE PRESIDENT AND NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL (COSENA). ROVIRA REVEALED HE HAD DISCUSSED ICRC WITH ARGENTINE FONMIN MONTES DURING LATTER'S APRIL 25 VISIT TO MONTEVIDEO. MONTES HAD TOLD HIM THAT GOA EXPERIENCE WITH ICRC WAS GOOD AND OBSERVED THAT VERY EXISTENCE OF THIS RELATIONSHIP HELPED ARGENTINA'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE. ROVIRA SAID MONTES' ENDORSEMENT OF ICRC WAS "VALUABLE" AND HE WOULD DRAW ON IT IN HIS PRESENTATIONS TO PRESIDENT AND COSENA.

5. COMMENT: IN MANY RESPECTS THE ICRC DELEGATES WERE
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ABLE TO CAPITALIZE ON THE IMPROVED ATMOSPHERE AND AROUSED GOU INTEREST IN TAKING POSITIVE STEPS TO IMPROVE ITS IMAGE LEFT BY THE ABA VISIT ONLY TWO WEEKS PRIOR. THE MEETING WITH RAPELLA WAS IN ITSELF A SIGNIFICANT BREAKTHROUGH. THE ICRC APPROACH WILL NOW AT LEAST GET CONSIDERATION FROM THOSE WHO REALLY COUNT IN THIS MILITARY GOVERNMENT. THE EMBASSY HAD INFORMED KEY MILITARY LEADERS OF THE VISIT AND HAD ADVISED THAT SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO RE-ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ICRC. ROVIRA'S SUPPORT, MOST PROBABLY IS A REFLECTION OF THE INTEREST SHOWN BY THE MILITARY. NONETHELESS, IT IS A PLUS, AS IS ARGENTINE FONMIN MONTES' ENDORSEMENT OF ICRC. WE, THEREFORE, ARE HOPEFUL THAT SOMETHING POSITIVE MAY BE IN THE OFFING. WE WILL FOLLOW UP AND LEND OUR SUPPORT AS APPROPRIATE TO THE EFFORT.

6. FOR GENEVA AND BUENOS AIRES: PLEASE PASS SUBSTANCE OF PARA 4 TO NESSI AND FABER WHOM WE HAVE AGREED TO KEEP INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENT.
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Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
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